



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good morning,

On behalf of the entire staff at the Arizona Office of Tourism, I wish all of you a festive and safe holiday season!

I hope you're ready for all the excitement that 2011 will bring! We look forward to another great year of working with our valued partners as we market Arizona's wonderful travel experiences.

If you're looking for ideas on what to do this holiday season with loved ones and friends, please be sure to check out www.ArizonaGuide.com for a full calendar of holiday events occurring throughout the state.

Happy Holidays!

AOT News

Send Us Your Holiday Travel Deals & Packages!

Now that we're heading into the holiday season, we're looking for holiday package deals from around the state to showcase on the Travel Deals and Packages section of www.ArizonaGuide.com. Post your travel packages today at <http://www.arizonaguide.com/arizona-tourism-partners> to take advantage of this no-cost opportunity.

Travel deals and packages can be uploaded at <http://www.arizonaguide.com/arizona-tourism-partners>.

For more information and step by step instructions, please visit our help guide located at <http://www.arizonaguide.com/arizona-tourism-partners/travel-deals-guide-help>.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[Canada Media Mission \(West\)](#)

Date: January 24 – 26, 2011

Location: Vancouver, BC and Calgary, AB

[UK Media Mission](#)

Dates: January 24 – 28, 2011

Location: United Kingdom

[Germany Media Mission](#)

Date: January 31 – February 4, 2011

Location: Germany and Switzerland

Industry News

Tour Operators See Better Year in 2011

Last year was one of rebound and higher sales for 2011 are expected, according to three-quarters of US Tours Operators in a USTOA survey.

“International travel saw a rebound in 2010, with more than three-quarters of survey respondents saying that travel had increased by an average 40 percent year over year, largely fueled by growth in Europe destinations,” the poll found.

Less than 15 percent saw business down, and nearly 10 percent said business was unchanged. Optimism over Europe sales is tempered by the fact that the Oberammergau Passion Play helped spike 2010 sales. This business will need to be replaced in 2011 by other products if Europe sales are to maintain their momentum, USTOA members said.

Domestic travel also was up, although less dramatically. More than half of responding USTOA members reported an average increase in travel by over 30 percent. Fully one-quarter of respondents saw domestic business unchanged compared to 2009, while nearly 20 percent said business was down. (*Travel Mole, December 13*)

ADR Growth Could Accelerate in 2011

Demand is coming back. So is revenue per available room. But average daily rate? Well, that's another story.

ADR has been suppressed during the ongoing hotel sector recovery. For the week ending 4 December, for example, STR reports the metric increased by just 0.5% to US\$96.87. By comparison, occupancy for the week ended up 4.7% to 49.9% while RevPAR increased 5.3% to US\$48.31.

Hoteliers have been through a lot during the past 18 months, so some hesitancy might be expected. But with demand returning, that hesitancy might be coming to an end, said Brad Garner, COO at STR.

Hoteliers are going to push rate, he said. "It's certainly good to hear."

It's advice that appears to have been heeded by Great Wolf Resorts. In its third-quarter earnings released last month, the company noted same store ADR for all properties increased by 2.3%, or US\$5.72, to US\$252.14.

And Chesapeake Lodging Trust also made mention of a positive pricing environment in its third-quarter earnings, too.

"With lodging demand increasing, pricing power began to return in the second quarter of 2010 in a few of the major leading markets such as New York, NY, Boston, MA, and Washington, D.C., with gains in average daily rate ("ADR") for the first time since the economic recession started. These positive trends continued, strengthened and expanded to other markets during the third quarter of 2010 ...," the company said.

U.S. cities among the top 25 markets that showed the highest ADR gains for the week were:

- Orlando, Florida: +11.3% to US\$99.80;
- San Francisco/San Mateo, California: +8.2% to US\$132.65; and
- Miami-Hialeah, Florida: +7.1% to US\$169.78.

Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, for one, seems to believe ADR will come back, according to information released during its 2010 Investor Day event. Given the choking off of new supply—the 40-year compound annual growth rate is 2%, according to Starwood—ADR should begin to pick up, executives noted during the event.

"We expect strong pricing power, given new hotel supply approaching historic lows, coupled with growing demand," the company said. (*HotelNewsNow.com, December 14*)

Facebook, Twitter: New Roadmap For High-End Travel

Facebook, Twitter and a host of invite-only travel websites are fast becoming a key pipeline for well-heeled travellers as well as the budget-conscious to find hot deals and destinations. Bigwigs from the world's elite travel industry gathered in the chic Riviera resort of Cannes for the annual

ILTM trade fair that wrapped up Thursday, had their eyes on social networks as a crucial tool for the future.

"Social networks, such as Facebook with its 600 million users, will have a dramatic impact on how affluent consumers make their (travel) decisions," Klara Glowczewska, editor of Conde Nast Traveler, told a conference at the event.

The American-born socialite and interior designer, Baroness Monica von Neumann, told Luxury Travel Magazine she uses travel websites for their customer reviews and hotel rankings.

"Testimonials really help in the decision-making process," Von Neumann said.

And the trend is set to intensify when the first wave of US baby boomers -- veteran travellers who are web-savvy and engaged in social networking -- turn 65 next year, predicts Preferred Hotel Group president Lindsey Ueberroth.

Matthew Upchurch, CEO of the elite network of travel agencies, Virtuoso, sees the Internet as opportunity more than threat for its 6,000-plus advisors, spread across 22 countries. "Social media is one of the best things that ever happened to true professional travel advisors," Upchurch told AFP. "I have up to 1,200 friends on Facebook, who are either close friends or colleagues and when I learn something really interesting about a destination that I have just come back from, I click 'share' and everybody benefits."

Social media are also starting to have a major impact on exclusive hotels and resorts, which are using them to boost their online presence, attract a new clientele and ensure customer ratings remain high.

Hotels are increasingly using Facebook and Twitter to publicise new activities and deals and keep up a dialogue with customers. Most luxury hotels today employ social media managers to protect their image and reputation online, Olivier Chavy, a senior luxury and lifestyle executive at the Conrad and Waldorf Astoria hotels and resorts, told AFP.

Online bookings today account for between 55 and 60 percent of all business, Chavy noted, meaning that a single bad review on a popular travel website can destroy a reputation for luxury that has taken years to build up.

Savvy up market travellers, however, can pick up tips on less well known websites and invitation-only online communities, such as a small world, the kiwi collection of hotels, Jetsetter, Rue La La, SniqueAway, Tablet Hotels, Vacationista or Voyage Prive. Online niche communities like a small world also offer well-off vacationers a chance to discover new discrete up market hotels, such as the new luxury Crans Ambassador hotel and resort that opens this Christmas in the Swiss Alps.

Social networking for travel is not confined to young, wealthy vacationers. Some 6.5 million of America's 77-million baby boomers are already active social networkers, according to a study carried out for the Preferred Hotel Group. While the very wealthiest boomers chose to get their travel advice from personal luxury experts, the Preferred Group study said millions of others spend hours researching and booking travel on the Web.

With the first wave of boomers turning 65 next year, a whole new healthy, wealthy and extremely active generation are about to intensify their passion for travel, the study suggests. *(Marketing and Tourism Trends, December 15)*

Study: Economic Impact of U.S. Visa Issues

Visitor visa issues impede participation in trade shows and act as a barrier to foreign trade, since they keep U.S. companies from meeting with clients and prospects, concludes a new landmark study from the Center for Exhibition Research (CEIR).

Titled, "The Economic Impact of International Non-Participation in the Exhibition Industry Due to U.S. Visa Issues," Successful Meetings reports the study was conducted for CEIR by Oxford Economics, which conducted a nationwide survey of the exhibition industry in summer 2010 and found that:

- Visa issues precluded 116,000 international participants - including 78,400 international attendees and 37,900 international exhibitors - from attending U.S. exhibitions.
- With no visa barriers in place, the U.S. economy would realize increases in business sales totaling at least \$2.4 billion, including \$1.5 billion in business-to-business trade, \$540 million in registration fees and exhibition space spending, and \$295 million in visitor spending.
- The new \$2.4 billion in sales would sustain more than 17,500 jobs directly and 43,000 jobs overall, and would generate \$750 million in state and federal taxes.

According to CEIR, current U.S. visa policy discourages or makes it impossible for many foreign travelers to obtain a visa to enter the country to conduct business at trade shows and exhibitions. Many of the visa interviews that take place at consulate offices, for instance, last just two minutes and offer no opportunity to explain one's need for the visa. *(Marketing and Tourism Trends, December 15)*

New Website Targets Group Travelers

Travel Weekly reports a startup website called Groupize.com is attempting to automate the complex and fragmented world of customized group travel, including motorcoaches and other forms of transport, plus hotels, attractions and restaurants.

The site was founded in Gloucester, Mass., by Charles de Gaspé Beaubien, and incorporates EasyBusRental.com, a search and booking site for motorcoach rentals that he launched earlier this year.

Groupize.com enables travel professionals and consumers to shop for group travel products and dynamically create tailor-made itineraries. Groupize.com is launching with 30 destinations in the U.S. and Canada.

"All this content doesn't exist," said de Gaspé Beaubien. "We're just out there contracting every group product there is ... and we're loading that up into the system." He said that the goal is to have between 3,000 and 5,000 group suppliers loaded into the system by the end of 2011.

Ultimately, de Gaspé Beaubien said, suppliers will be able to upload their information themselves, but for now Groupize is uploading all the inventory for suppliers "for consistency reasons." *(Marketing and Tourism Trends, December 15)*

Study: 8% of U.S. Online Population Use Twitter

Twitter, like Facebook, may have quickly become one of the Internet's best-known brands in recent years, but only 8% of American adults online are using the microblogging service, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. That figure equates to 6% of the total U.S. population says Online Media Daily.

The study found that Twitter, not surprisingly, was more popular with young people, minorities, and urbanites. It also showed that about a quarter of users check Twitter several times a day for new material and that overall, they post a wide variety of content to the site.

The 8% of the Web population using Twitter is equal to the proportion that use online dating sites and a bit less than the 11% that buy or sell stocks, bonds or mutual funds online, according to Pew data. It's also double the 4% of Internet users who use location-based services such as Foursquare and Gowalla, based on findings from a separate Pew study released last month.

Twitter said it had 175 million registered users worldwide as of mid-September, but that figure is estimated to be closer to 200 million now. Twitter.com had 105 million monthly unique visitors worldwide in October, and 25 million in the U.S., according to comScore. The Pew study obviously does not include teen Twitter fans, although other research has suggested the service is not wildly popular with that age group.

Among adults, users nevertheless skew young, with 14% of Internet users ages 18 to 29 going on Twitter, compared to 7% of those 30-49, 6% of those 50-64, and 4% of those 65 and older. In terms of race, only 5% of white Web users access Twitter, compared to 13% of black Internet users and 18% of the Hispanic Web population. The study also found that Twitter claims 11% of online users who live in cities, compared to 8% of suburbanites and 5% of those in rural areas. *(Marketing and Tourism Trends, December 15)*

U.S. Holiday Air Traffic to Rise 3.1%

Bloomberg reports U.S. airlines will carry 43.6 million passengers during the Christmas-New Year's holiday season, a 3.1 percent increase from a year earlier, as travel demand rises, the Air Transport Association estimated.

As many as 2.3 million people a day may fly during the 21-day period from Dec. 16 through Jan. 5, the Washington-based trade group for the major U.S. carriers said in a statement today. Planes may average as much as 90 percent full on the busiest days, according to the association.

"With demand for air travel showing signs of improvement, airlines are hoping to see industry profitability continue into 2011," James C. May, the group's chief executive officer, said in the statement.

The federal government may open some restricted airspace during the period to ease congestion, as it did during the Thanksgiving holidays, the group said. *(Marketing and Tourism Trends, December 15)*

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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